

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman

Tsunetaro Miyakoda

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Editors:

Kaname Tsukahara

Robert W. Northup

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JAPAN BIBLE SOCIETY OBSERVES WORLD-WIDE BIBLE SUNDAY

On December 13, the Japan Bible Society will join other countries' associations by observing World-wide Bible Sunday. Annually, the period from Nov. 26 - Dec. 25 is designated as a special period for emphasis on Bible reading in keeping with this observation.

Even in Japan, whose Christian membership is small, the Bible has again been a best-seller in the current year. Japan Bible Society's General Director, Rev. Tsunetaro Miyakoda reported that post-war distribution has increased annually.

The Japan Bible Society has two methods of distribution: colporteurs work in teams, visiting various parts of Japan and making a house-to-house visit to explain their work and to sell the Bible or individual books. The most popular works have continued to be the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Solomon. Secondly, Although it has not been widely known, the Bible Society has also opened branch stores in 6 areas: Sapporo, Hokkaido; Sendai; Nagoya; Osaka; Fukuoka; and Okinawa. These were opened about two years ago. In addition, 500 or more regular book-stores are serviced by the Society, selling Bibles or individual books. It is expected that their number will be gradually increased. Recently, two Secretaries visited Okinawa to initiate a Bible-distribution movement.

Numbers of distribution and sale during the last year indicate the width of this work: 92,425 Bibles, 447,038 New Testaments, and 1,427,088 individual books, were sold. There were also sold or distributed 2840 Braille publications. The total amount were 1,969,173 copies. This represents a total increase of 67,653 volumes over last year.

General Director Miyakoda, commenting on the cooperation of the Society with the Protestant Centennial commemoration, said: It is surprising that in this year, 92,000 copies of the Bible were sold. The reason is that the colloquial version has been published and also because the Bible has become more closely related to Japanese thought. Movies such as "Ten Commandments" and "Solomon and Sheba" bring Old Testament stories to the public and seem to encourage sales. Next year, we hope to reach a sales number of about 2,000,000 volumes.

The Japan Bible Society has also recently welcomed General Secretary W. A. Acherman of the Home Bible League and his colleague, H. Chapman. They were invited by the Society and will observe its work in Japan.

JAPAN'S OLDEST BIBLE

Japan's oldest "Bible" is a 120 page booklet written in katakana, (the simplest Japanese syllabary), and entitled "The John. Printed by Ka Bookstore in Singapore." At a time when Japan was strictly closed to all foreign commerce, a coasting junk left the port near Nagoya with a cargo for Yedo (Tokyo). A grave stone, recently discovered in the Ryosan Temple of Zen sect, Onoura, Mihama-cho, Aichi Prefecture, lists 14 "fishermen" who were apparently lost at sea. The date of their acknowledged death is Oct. 11, 1832, and among the names are Iwakichi, Hisakichi, and Otokichi.

These apparently unrelated facts have been drawn together through recent investigation by the Japan Bible Society and added to by letters of individual investigators. For the three men named did not die at sea but when they were shipwrecked in the Pacific were sent to Canada, England, and finally to Macao. There they came under the care of Dr. Karl F. Gutzlaff, a Prussian-born affiliate of the London Missionary Society. It is not clear how the book of John was composed, though it is thought that Gutzlaff learned Japanese from the fishermen and composed it. The style of the writing is said to suggest "the speech of illiterate fishermen of the day."

In 1837, an American ship The Morrison attempted to return the three men and four others to Japan, hoping to make a "favorable impression" on the Japanese so that trade might be started. But at Kagoshima, the ship was fired upon and had to return. Two of the men, whose names are unknown, stayed with Gutzlaff for many years and it may have been in the later period that the translation was done.

While Dr. J. C. Hepburn had a copy of this earliest translation, it is not clear whether or not he used it for his own work. At present, only two copies appear to be accounted for (one at the Japan Association, one at Meiji Gakuin) although in 1939 5 copies were known.

The general secretary of the Japan Bible Society, Tsunetaro Miyakoda told recently of plans to erect a monument at Onoura to the memory of the three men who aided in the first translation.

CHRISTIAN WOMAN LEADER HEADS RUSSIA-BOUND GROUP

In 1958, 3 women representatives from Russian attended a meeting in Hong Kong. At that time they extended an invitation to Japanese women's groups to send representatives to Russia's non-political national meeting of women's groups in January, 1960.

In accepting the invitation, the Japan Federation of Women's Groups recently chose six delegates. One representative was chosen from each of the following groups: Women's Regional Councillors; Women's National Councillors Group; Socialist Party -- represented by Mrs. Hideko Hirata, former member of the Diet; Communist Party -- represented by the head of its women's division, Mrs. Asano Karita; Sohyo, the largest labor union; and the W.C.T.U., represented by Mrs. Masako Takegami.

As leader of the group, chosen by the members, Mrs. Masako Takegami declared that as the representative of a Christian group she is grateful for being chosen as the leader. In the visit to Russia, she hopes to meet with Christians and to learn about their life and work.

The group will leave from Japan on December 10 by boat, going to Nahotoka, and will fly from there to Moscow, staying about one month. The Russian hosts and the visiting delegates will each pay one-half of the traveling expenses.

COC MEETS WITH FOREIGN SECRETARIES

At the November meeting of the Council of Cooperation (Kyodan-IBC) secretaries of member boards who were visiting Japan for the Centennial celebration attended. The findings of the conference mark another step in unification of Christian strategy. During the past years, attempts to unite the social, educational, and evangelistic work of the church have increased, culminating in the present findings. These are:

"1. Representatives of the IBC challenged the member bodies of the COC in Japan to reflect on the primarily consultative role of the COC in the past. The need was stated that the COC assume the character of an aggressive planning organ consistently and responsibly concerned with the carrying out of the plan through its member bodies.

"2. General agreement was expressed concerning the principle of 'Church-to-Church confrontation' in the relationship of COC and IBC. However, in the light of the historical origins, development, and present situation of the Christian schools and social work institutions in Japan, reservations were expressed concerning immediate organizational changes. The hope was shared that the United Church, schools and social institutions may unite quickly in one program of Christian advance. Out of this cooperative work the basis for closer organizational relationship of the schools and social institutions with the church will gradually be built.

"3. The conference believes that the progress in cooperation and understanding between the Kyodan, the schools and social work institutions achieved since the March Conference through national and local level conferences and through beginning steps in cooperative programs represents the proper direction for the future. However, recognizing also that the time is not yet ripe for serious organizational changes, this conference recommends that the Executive Committee of the COC

appoint a special committee for the preparation of concrete proposals toward bringing about the realization of the hope expressed in the finding above."

AVACO: MEMORIAL AND DEDICATION SERVICE HELD

On October 24th, from 2:30 in the afternoon a special memorial worship service was held in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Audio Visual Activities Commission (AVACO) of the National Christian Council of Japan. At the service, held in Studio I of the Christian Audio Visual Center on the campus of Aoyama Gakuin University. The approximately one hundred leaders gathered, gave thanks to God also for the new four story addition to the Christian Audio Visual Center which has just been completed.

Bishop Tsunenori Takase of the Anglican-Episcopal Church, Chairman of the AVACO Board, presided at the brief service. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Dr. K. C. Hendricks, missionary of the Disciples of Christ, and to Rev. Richard A. Merritt, missionary of the Anglican-Episcopal Church, in recognition of their continuous service on the AVACO board for the ten years of its existence. A similar certificate recognized the almost ten years of service of AVACO Executive Director, Mathew Seishi Ogawa.

Greetings were given on behalf of RAVEMCCO of the Division of Foreign Missions, NCCC, USA, by Rev. Alexander Meyer, Lutheran missionary. Japanese pastors of the Baptist, Lutheran Churches and the United Church of Christ, members of the board who represent together a two-thirds majority of the body, read the Scripture, offered the prayers of thanksgiving and gave greetings.

An informal tea was held afterward on the second floor in the Aoyama Room, where refreshments were enjoyed together along with various informal expressions of appreciation and thanksgiving for the work and leaders of AVACO. Rev. Takihiro Yamakita of the United Church of Christ, presided.

BRIEF NEWS NOTES:

Kagawa Hall Planned: Recently a group in Kobe formed the "Promoters for the Project in Memory of Toyohiko Kagawa", to show their gratitude for work done in the Shinkawa slum area of Kobe, where the memorial will be built. Dr. Kagawa, now receiving medical treatment at his home in Tokyo, began social work in Shinkawa nearly 50 years ago.

The sponsors of the project include Gov. Masaru Sakamoto of Hyogo Prefecture, Kazuo Nakai, member of the House of Representatives, and other well known persons in religious, political, and financial circles. Present plans call for a nation-wide campaign to raise ¥40 million to construct a 3-story ferro-concrete building to include lodgings for "settlers", a clinic for laborers, and a library. The fund headquarters is the Kobe Jesus Mission, 5-3, Azumadori, Fukiai-ku, Kobe.

Dr. Perry Dies: Dr. Charles E. Perry, long-time professor of history at St. Paul's University, Tokyo, died on Thursday, November 26. He had apprehended a student from Daito Bunka University, who had thrown a stone through Dr. Perry's window. The student had been apparently drinking and with his companion beat Dr. Perry, using blows learned in

the fighting art of "karate". Following rescue by a Japanese colleague, and urging that no action be taken against the youths, Dr. Perry was taken to his home where he later died. At his funeral, St. Paul's University conferred posthumously the degree of doctor of letters upon Dr. Perry, symbolized by a cape placed upon the casket. Dr. Kenneth E. Heim, representative of the American Episcopalian Church in Japan presided at the rites.

"The Missionary in the Nuclear Age" Seminary Planned: On January 4-7, 1960, a seminar will be held to consider the role of "The Missionary in the Nuclear Age." With the place not yet determined, it is intended to limit the group to a small number so that serious and thorough participation by all members will be possible. An ad hoc committee of nine members of various Christian groups is planning the program.

The Rev. David Makoto Goto Consecrated as Bishop: In a public ceremony witnessed by 1,000 designated churchmen at St. Margaret's School Chapel, Tokyo, The Rev. David Makoto Goto was consecrated as fifth bishop of Tokyo, Anglican Church in Japan. Attending the ceremony was Presiding Bishop Yashiro with the consecration sermon delivered by the Rev. Dr. Kenneth E. Heim, senior American Episcopal missionary in Japan.

New Baptist Church Dedicated, Student Center Planned: The Southern Baptist Church dedicated a new English-speaking church in a week-long program, Nov. 1-8, in Tokyo. Prominent leaders from the U.S. attending the ceremonies spoke at meetings. The Rev. Milton E. DuPriest was installed as the new pastor. The Baptist group also plans to build a student center in Tokyo by mid-1960, declared Dr. Kearnei Keegan, director of U.S. student activities department of the Southern Baptist Church.

The Rev. Yasuo Furuya Named ICU Pastor: On November 29, the Rev. Yasuo Furuya was installed as pastor of the church at International Christian University. He has just returned from study abroad. After his work at Tokyo Union Seminary, and work as assistant pastor at Ito Church, he went to San Francisco Seminary, then to Princeton, from which he received a Th. D., and he studied later at Tübingen and Basel. He was ordained at New Brunswick, New Jersey. The Rev. Furuya is the son of the late Rev. Magojiro Furuya.

